

Basic 3-Minute Mindful Breathing Activity

(Adapted from 'Full Catastrophe Living' by Jon Kabat-Zinn)

For most of us, our minds tend to wander a lot and to jump quite rapidly from one thing to another. When we start paying attention to where your mind is from moment to moment, you will find that considerable amounts of time and energy are expended in anticipating, planning, worrying, and fantasizing about the future and what you want or don't want to happen. Because of this inner busyness, we miss out on the beauty and richness of the here-and-now. This 3-minute exercise will allow us to practice paying greater attention to the present moment.

Close your eyes, sit so that your back is straight but not stiff, and become aware of your breathing. Don't try to control your breathing. Just let it happen and be aware of it, feeling how it feels, witnessing it as it flows in and out. Try being with your breath in this way for three minutes.

If at some point you think it is foolish or boring to just sit here and watch your breath go in and out, note to yourself that this is just a thought, a judgment your mind is creating. Then simply let go of it and bring your attention back to your breathing.

When you have completed three minutes watching your breath go in and out, reflect how you felt during this time and how much or how little your mind wandered away from your breathing.

Mindfulness DOES NOT involve trying to get anywhere or feel any particular way ("Happy" or "Peaceful" for example). Rather, it involves allowing yourself to be where you already are, to become familiar with your own actual experience moment by moment.